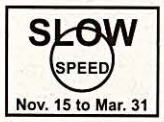
Boating Speed Zones

To alert the boater and protect the manatee in its sanctuaries, the law provides a number of cautionary and regulatory speed zones. The following illustrates and explains typical signs found on Florida's waterways:

Idle Speed Zone - Regulated area - a zone in which boats are not permitted to go any faster than necessary to be steered; generally these sigins appear near the center of a protected manatee sanctuary.



Slow Speed Zone - Regulated Area - a minimum-wake zone where boats must not be on a plane and must be level in the water.

Caution Sign - posted by individuals in areas frequently inhabited by manatees. Requests caution on the part of boaters to avoid disturbing or injuring the animals.

No Entry Zone - a protected zone that prohibits boating, swimming and diving for the protection of manatees.

Safe Operation Zone - a sign indicating that you may resume safe boating speed; visible as you leave a protected area.

Manatees and the Law

Manatees are protected by the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972, the Endangered Species Act of 1973 and the Florida Manatee Sanctuary Act of 1978. It is illegal to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, annoy or molest manatees.

The state of Florida has also established a number of cautionary and regulatory speed zones to protect the manatee and its habitat.

Anyone convicted of violating state law faces maximum fines of $500 and/or imprisonment of up to 60 days. Conviction for violating federal protection laws is punishable by fines up to $100,000 and/or one year in prison.

Please obey all manatee protection laws.

To report manatee deaths, injuries, harassment or orphaned manatees, call the
FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
MARINE ENFORCEMENT UNIT
1-888-404-FWCC
(1-888-404-3922)
***FWC - mobile**

For more information write to:

Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission
Office of Environmental Services
Bureau of Protected Species Management
620 South Meridian Street OES-BPS
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1600
(850) 922-4330

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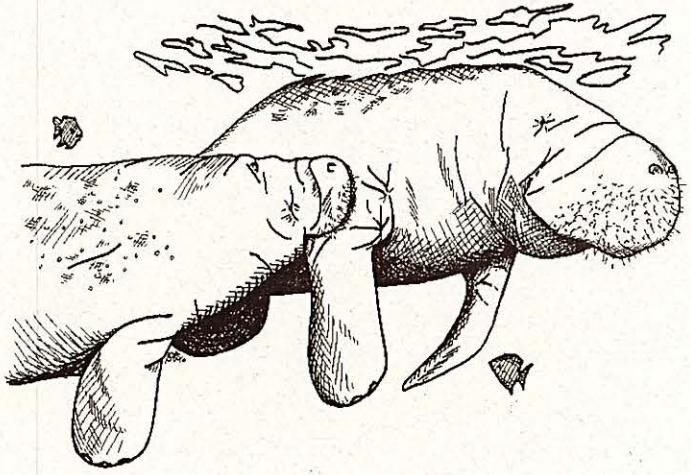
Eph-Natural Resources

Manatees

Miss Her Now or Miss Her Forever



A Guide for Boating, Diving and Snorkeling Around Manatees

The Manatee Needs Your Help

The West Indian manatee is a large gray-brown aquatic mammal. Its seal-like body tapers to a flat, paddle-shaped tail. The upper part of its body has two small forelimbs with three to four nails on each flipper. The head and face are wrinkled and the snout has stiff whiskers.

Adults have been known to reach lengths of over 13 feet and weights of over 3,000 pounds. Calves are three to four feet long and 60 to 70 pounds at birth.

Manatees spend most of their time feeding and resting. They graze for food along rivers, coastal areas and at the water's surface. Manatees have been known to hold their breath for as long as 20 minutes, but they usually surface about every five minutes to breathe.

Their minimum population is estimated to be between 2,500 to 3,000; however, the continuing development of Florida's coastal areas and habitat loss threatens the manatee's survival.

As a Wildlife Watcher, you are encouraged to follow the guidelines in this brochure when you encounter manatees in Florida.

You can help support manatee protection efforts in Florida by purchasing a Save the Manatee license plate for your vehicle.

(Contact your local County Tax office for more information.)

What Can Boaters Do?

You can reduce your chances of harming a manatee by following these simple steps:

- **Wear polarized glasses while operating a boat.** Polarized lenses make it much easier to see objects beneath the surface and the "swirling" that occurs when a manatee dives. (The swirls look like a large "footprint" on the water's surface or a series of half moon swirls if the manatee is traveling.)

- **Stay in the marked channels.** Manatees have shown signs that they are avoiding heavy boat traffic areas. Channel depth reduces the likelihood of pinning or crushing manatees.

- **Pole, paddle or use a trolling motor when you are near seagrass beds.** Grass beds are prime manatee habitat. This includes areas where hydrilla and water hyacinths are present.

- **Slow down.** Reducing boat speed gives you greater maneuverability to avoid a manatee when you see one. You will also increase your safety margin with other boats and will save gas as well.

- **Observe and follow all manatee speed zones and caution areas.**

Manatee habitat needs are space, water, food and shelter. Help keep manatee habitat healthy by keeping litter and pollution out of the waterways.

What Can Divers Do?

As divers or snorkelers, you are directly entering the manatee's habitat. By following these simple guidelines you can minimize your impact.

- **Use snorkel gear if you dive near manatees.** The sound of bubbles from scuba gear can frighten manatees. Manatees at warm water sites should not be disturbed as they must conserve energy to help them stay warm in cold weather.

- **Manatees are wild animals and should not be fed.** Close exposure to or dependence on humans can be harmful to them.

- **While swimming or diving, do not approach or chase a manatee.** Move away slowly and immediately if an animal stops feeding and comes toward you or changes its direction of travel.

- **A cow and her calf belong together.** Please do not separate them as the calf needs its mother to survive.

- **Never poke, prod or stab a manatee with your hands, feet or any object.** Share the joy of wildlife viewing with others, especially children, and teach them about the importance of not disturbing animals.

- **Look, but please DO NOT TOUCH manatees.** Touching is a form of harassment.

- **Take only as many pictures as a manatee will "pose" for.** Do not pursue a manatee that is camera-shy. Remember to keep your distance and use zoom lenses to get close to wildlife.